

University of Wollongong Research Online

University of Wollongong Thesis Collection
1954-2016

University of Wollongong Thesis Collections

1995

Attitudes of Iranian mothers towards family planning, family size and fertility

Abolghasem Pour Reza Anvar
University of Wollongong

Follow this and additional works at: <https://ro.uow.edu.au/theses>

University of Wollongong

Copyright Warning

You may print or download ONE copy of this document for the purpose of your own research or study. The University does not authorise you to copy, communicate or otherwise make available electronically to any other person any copyright material contained on this site.

You are reminded of the following: This work is copyright. Apart from any use permitted under the Copyright Act 1968, no part of this work may be reproduced by any process, nor may any other exclusive right be exercised, without the permission of the author. Copyright owners are entitled to take legal action against persons who infringe their copyright. A reproduction of material that is protected by copyright may be a copyright infringement. A court may impose penalties and award damages in relation to offences and infringements relating to copyright material.

Higher penalties may apply, and higher damages may be awarded, for offences and infringements involving the conversion of material into digital or electronic form.

Unless otherwise indicated, the views expressed in this thesis are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the views of the University of Wollongong.

Recommended Citation

Pour Reza Anvar, Abolghasem, Attitudes of Iranian mothers towards family planning, family size and fertility, Doctor of Philosophy thesis, Graduate School of Health and Medical Sciences, University of Wollongong, 1995. <https://ro.uow.edu.au/theses/1880>

Research Online is the open access institutional repository for the University of Wollongong. For further information contact the UOW Library: research-pubs@uow.edu.au

NOTE

This online version of the thesis may have different page formatting and pagination from the paper copy held in the University of Wollongong Library.

UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG

COPYRIGHT WARNING

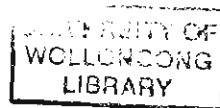
You may print or download ONE copy of this document for the purpose of your own research or study. The University does not authorise you to copy, communicate or otherwise make available electronically to any other person any copyright material contained on this site. You are reminded of the following:

Copyright owners are entitled to take legal action against persons who infringe their copyright. A reproduction of material that is protected by copyright may be a copyright infringement. A court may impose penalties and award damages in relation to offences and infringements relating to copyright material. Higher penalties may apply, and higher damages may be awarded, for offences and infringements involving the conversion of material into digital or electronic form.

**ATTITUDES OF IRANIAN MOTHERS TOWARDS FAMILY PLANNING,
FAMILY SIZE AND FERTILITY**

**A THESIS SUBMITTED IN FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF**

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY



FROM:

UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG

BY

ABOLGHASEM POUR REZA ANVAR

GRADUATE SCHOOL OF HEALTH AND MEDICAL SCIENCES

DECEMBER 1995

DEDICATION

To the immortal memory of my mother:

A Goddess of humanity and kindness who died during this study.

DECLARATION

I declare that the work described in Attitudes of Iranian Mothers Towards Fertility Family Planning And Family Size is entirely my own work. References to the work of others are indicated in the text. This work has not been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma at any other University.

A. Pour reza

10/December/1995

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Many people and institutions (national and international) have helped in this work to be carried out. I would like to thank all of them from the bottom of my heart, but in particular I would like to thank :

Professor Ross Harris, my supervisor for his support, encouragement and constructive comments and criticism, as well as lecturers and staff of the Department of Public Health of the University of Wollongong, because of their cooperative manner.

World Health Organization, World Bank, The Population Council, American Public Health Association and The Johns Hopkins University, which provided me generously and constantly with their most recent publication in the area of the study.

Dr. Victoria Wasetly Wise, Dr. Glenn Mitchell, and Hazel England, from Illawarra Area Health Services and the University of Wollongong, for their help in developing research instruments, editorial work and comments.

The Ministry of Health of Iran, Statistics Centre of Iran, and University of Tehran because of their very generous and particular assistance that has been given to the researcher in terms of access to clinics and administrative process of data collection, access to censuses and relevant data, computer facilities utilization and consulting services.

Finally, I would thank Iranian mothers, who agreed to participate in the study and gave their invaluable time to respond. I wish them all the best.

ABSTRACT

Fertility and fertility control behaviour in the context of developing countries is substantially important because of its health, environmental, socio-economic, and policy implications.

This study investigates the fertility behaviour of 406 Iranian women, randomly selected from three regions of the capital city of Tehran. These women were once married, aged 15-45 years and fertile. Demographic, socio-economic, attitudinal and policy-oriented variables relevant to fertility and fertility control behaviour together with psychological factors such as 'subjective norms' were taken into account in order to analyse the issues comprehensively.

Data was collected through a questionnaire, including three scales for 'abortion', 'contraceptive', and 'son preference' with 20 items, and 33 questions which have been recognized as valid, important, and influential on fertility and fertility control behaviour. Alpha Cronbach was calculated for each scale separately and for all items collectively. It revealed a very high 'intercorrelation' and 'internal consistency' among items of each scale and all other items and demonstrated a very distinctive reliability.

Chi-Square test, Analysis of Variance, Multiple and Stepwise Regression analysis were conducted in order to find association, differences, effects and importance of each variable on the sample's attitudes and behaviour towards abortion, contraceptive usage, sex preference and family size.

Demographic and socio-economic factors have significantly differentiated fertility behaviour of the respondent. A significant relationship was found between 'duration of marriage' and 'existing family size' on the one hand, and between 'women's status', as a combined variable, and 'ideal family size' on the other. A similar significant relationship was also found between 'women's status' and 'ideal family size' as well as 'attitudes towards

son preference' ($p < .01$). It has been concluded that 'attitudes towards abortion' and 'contraceptive usage' have mainly been affected by post-war socio-economic circumstances as well as policy-oriented variables.

Multiple and stepwise regression analysis demonstrated 'duration of marriage' - 'age at marriage' - as the strongest determinant of family size which accounts for about 62 per cent variation of 'family size' among the respondent. 'Education' as one of 'women's status' variables demonstrated stronger effect on 'family size', 'ideal family size' and 'son preference' than did the other variable, 'occupation'. 'Perceived ideal family size among other families' as a psychological factor, together with 'existing family size' of the respondents was recognized as major determinant of their 'ideal family size' and account for 29 out of 31 percent variation about the 'ideal family size' of the respondent. Data was processed by using SPSS and STATVIEW GRAPHICS statistical packages.

All important and determinant variables and their multidimensional implications on fertility, fertility control and social life are investigated. The findings are discussed with reference to gender differences as well as other structural characteristics of the study site.

The study revealed that 'husbands', 'health workers', 'friends and neighbours' are the most influential groups on fertility related behaviour of the respondents. There are also indicators of a successful family planning program effort on national level population growth control. It has also been asserted that the effectiveness of the programs is due mainly to post-war socio-economic circumstances. Despite this achievement, fertility control behaviour has a long way to be institutionalised and mean time there are some structural components which may favour higher fertility particularly in the absence of an effective family planing program.

CONTENTS

	Page
Dedication	i
Declaration	ii
Acknowledgment	iii
Abstract	iv
Contents	vi
Tables	xii
 1. Introduction:	 1
1.1 The significance of the subject	1
1.2 Socio-economic and political implications	2
1.3 Environmental implications of population increase	3
1.4 Health implications of population growth	6
1.5 Reasons that support the investigation of these issues	9
1.6 The importance of attitudes	11
1.7 The aims of the study	13
 2. Review of literature	 15
2.1 Population growth and family planning in Iran	15
2.1.1 Introduction: The historical background	15
2.1.2 Beginning of population growth in Iran	15
2.1.3 Family planning before the Revolution	18
2.1.4 Contraceptive methods	19
2.1.5 Family planning after the Islamic Revolution	21
2.2 Population, fertility and fertility control in Islam and Islamic countries	 26
2.2.1 Introduction	26
2.2.2 Family, family formation and characteristics	26
2.2.3 Value of child bearing	29
2.2.4 Population characteristics	30
2.2.5 Family planning and Islam (Views on family planning)	32
2.2.6 Contraceptive methods and Islam	33

2.2.7 Socio-economic environment and fertility	35
2.3 Status of women and fertility behavior	36
2.3.1 Introduction	36
2.3.2 Indicators and measurements	36
2.3.3 Women's status in Islamic countries	39
2.3.4 Women's status in Iran	43
2.3.5 Women's status in Iran after the Islamic Revolution	46
2.4 Sex preference	49
2.4.1 Introduction; the significance of sex preference	49
2.4.2 Roles and values of children	49
2.4.3 Son preference, fertility and family planning	52
2.4.4 Health and social implications of sex preference	54
2.4.5 Indicators of son preference	55
2.4.6 Son preference, Islam and Iran	56
2.5 Occupation and labor force participation	58
2.5.1 Introduction and importance	58
2.5.2 Factors, variables and incentives	58
2.5.3 Dominant hypothesis	59
2.5.4 Work and types of work	60
2.5.5 Development and work participation of women	63
2.6 Education, fertility and family planning	65
2.6.1 Introduction: the importance of education	65
2.6.2 Multi-dimensional effects of education on fertility	66
2.6.2.1 Social effects	66
2.6.2.2 Economical effects	67
2.6.2.3 Cultural effects	68
2.6.3 Education and fertility in empirical findings	69
2.6.4 Education, fertility and fertility control	70
2.6.5 Education of male and female	71
2.6.6 Summary	71

2.7	Age at marriage	73
2.7.1	Introduction: Age at marriage and its importance	73
2.7.2	Population with an early age at marriage	73
2.7.3	Health and social implications of early marriage	74
2.7.4	Population with a later age at marriage	75
2.7.5	Age at marriage and policy	76
2.7.6	Age and family planning	77
2.7.7	Age at marriage and socio-economic circumstances	77
2.8	Other important variables and fertility behavior	79
2.8.1	Modernization	79
2.8.2	Urbanization	81
2.8.3	Income	82
2.9	Family planning and fertility	84
2.9.1	Introduction, general view and importance	84
2.9.2	Family planning, socio-economic and cultural context	85
2.9.3	Methods, definitions, classifications and perceptions	86
2.9.4	Health and policy implications	88
2.10	Family size	91
2.10.1	Introduction	91
2.10.2	Family size and health implications	91
2.10.3	Social implications	92
2.10.4	Family size and family planning	93
3.	Theoretical framework on fertility	95
3.1	Introduction: complexity of the fertility study	95
3.2	Theory of demographic transition	97
3.3	Theory of wealth flow	99
3.4	The “new home economic models” or “Chicago school micro-economic theory”	104
3.5	Development, population and fertility	108
3.6	Towards a theoretical framework	109
3.7	Hypothesis	111

4. Methodology	113
4.1 Introduction	113
4.2 Selected (survey) method	113
4.3 The site of the survey	113
4.4 Population sample characteristics	115
4.5 Sample selection and size	116
4.6 Variables	118
4.7 Methods of data collection and research instrument development	119
4.7.1 Problems with official data	119
4.7.2 Problems with face to face interview	120
4.7.3 Methods of data collection	121
4.7.4 Questionnaire development	121
4.7.4.1 The structure of the questionnaire	122
4.7.4.1.1 Demographic variables	122
4.7.4.1.2 Socio-economic variables	122
4.7.4.1.3 Attitudinal variables	122
4.7.4.1.4 Policy-oriented variables	123
4.7.4.2 Questionnaire design and level of measurement	123
4.8 Pilot study	125
4.9 Reliability	125
4.10 Validity	127
4.11 Statistical techniques for analysis of data	128
4.12 Operational definition	129
5. Descriptive statistics analysis	133
5.1 Demographic characteristics of the study population	133
5.2 Socio-economic characteristics of the study sample	140
5.3 Attitudinal characteristics of the study population	143
5.4 Policy-oriented characteristics of the study population	160
5.5 Overview of descriptive analysis	166
6. Statistical analysis	174
6.1 Reliability of the attitudinal scales of the study	174
6.2 Chi-Square tests	179
6.2.1 Existing, ideal and perceived family size	182
6.2.2 Attitudes towards abortion	185

6.2.3 Attitudes towards contraceptives	185
6.2.4 Attitudes towards son preference	187
6.3 Analysis of variance	189
6.3.1 Existing family size	192
6.3.2 Desired family size	193
6.3.3 Perceptions about desired number of children among ‘other families’ or in ‘society’	196
6.3.4 Attitudes towards abortion	197
6.3.5 Attitudes towards contraceptives	199
6.3.6 Attitudes towards son preference	200
6.4 Multiple regression	202
6.5 Stepwise regression	207
7. Discussion and Conclusion	214
7.1 Introduction	214
7.2 General outlook	217
7.3 Empirical findings and characteristics of the sample	220
7.4 Implications	222
7.5 Education	224
7.6 Further implications	227
7.7 Occupation	228
7.8 Place of birth and place of residence	231
7.9 Son - preference	236
7.10 Fertility control (Abortion and Family planning services)	239
7.11 Family planning and contraceptive behaviour	242
7.12 Conclusion	245
8- References	249
9- Appendices	275
A. The Ministry of Health and Medical Education approval.	276
B. The University of Medical Sciences and Health Services of Tehran approval.	277
C. The University of Medical Sciences and Health Services of Shahid Beheshti approval.	278
D. The University of Medical Sciences and Health Services of Iran approval.	279

E. Human Experimentation Ethics Committee approval.280

F. Questionnaire.281

G. Questionnaire in Persian.293

LIST OF TABLES

	Page
Table 2.1.2.1 - Size and annual growth rate of Iran's population, 1900-1979	16
Table 5.1.1 - Regional distribution of the sample.....	133
Table 5.1.2 - Age distribution of the spouses	134
Table 5.1.3 - Place of birth	135
Table 5.1.4 - Duration of residency in Tehran	135
Table 5.1.5 - Age at marriage	136
Table 5.1.6 - Number of children in the respondents' families	137
Table 5.1.7 - Distribution of existing family size	138
Table 5.1.8 - Duration of marriage	138
Table 5.2.1 - Educational attainment of the sample and their husbands	140
Table 5.2.2 - Occupation	141
Table 5.2.3 - Home modernization	142
Table 5.2.4 - Ownership of residence	142
Table 5.3.1 - Number of children (sex specific) desired by the respondent	143
Table 5.3.2 -Total number of children desired by the respondents by sex and irrespective of sex.....	144
Table 5.3.3 - Number of children (boys and girls) desired by "other families"	146
Table 5.3.4 - The spouses' opinion about pregnancy prevention	147
Table 5.3.5 - The respondents' opinion about abortion	148
Table 5.3.6 - Attitudes of the respondents toward abortion	149
Table 5.3.7 - Attitudes and beliefs of the respondents about contraceptive usage	152
Table 5.3.8 - Desired level of education for children	154
Table 5.3.9 - Preferred age of marriage for children	155
Table 5.3.10 - Attitudes and beliefs of the respondents about sex preference	156
Table 5.3.11 - Preferred person to contraception	159
Table 5.4.1 - Knowledge about contraceptive methods	160
Table 5.4.2 - Sources of information, advisers for practice of contraceptive and references in case of reproduction system's problem among the respondents	162
Table 5.4.3 - Methods of contraception which are used, and preferred by the respondents	164
Table 5.4.4 - The purpose of contraceptive use	165
Table 6.1.1 - Attitude scaled items towards abortion: Intercorrelations (Alpha coefficient)	176
Table 6.1.1.1 - Attitudes towards abortion (Alpha coefficient)	176
Table 6.1.2 - Attitude scaled items towards contraceptives : Intercorrelation (Alpha coefficient).....	177
Table 6.1.2.1 - Attitudes/perceptions towards contraceptives (Alpha coefficient)	177
Table 6.1.3 - Attitude scaled items towards son preference: Intercorrelation (Alpha coefficient) ..	178
Table 6.1.3.1 - Attitudes towards son preference (Alpha coefficient)	178

Table 6.1.4 - Reliability measurement for all items (Alpha coefficient)	179
Table 6.2.1 - Percentage distribution of number of children of the respondents by their ownership of residency	183
Table 6.2.2 - Distribution of residential areas and attitudes towards abortion	185
Table 6.2.3 - Distribution of residential areas and attitudes about contraceptives	186
Table 6.2.4 - Distribution of occupation of the respondents and sex-preference	188
Table 6.3.1 - Analysis of variance for ownership of residence and family size	193
Table 6.3.2 - Analysis of variance for educational level of the respondents and attitudes towards 'ideal family size'.	194
Table 6.3.3 - Analysis of variance for residential areas and perception about desired family size among "other families"	196
Table 6.3.4 - Analysis of variance for respondents' occupation and attitudes towards abortion ..	198
Table 6.3.5 - Analysis of variance for son preference and attitudes towards contraceptives	199
Table 6.3.6 - Respondent occupation and attitudes towards son preference	201
Table 6.4.1 - Multiple regression for women's status and dependent variables	203
Table 6.4.1.1 - Beta coefficient of multiple regression for independent variables	204
Table 6.5.1 - Stepwise Regression for desired family size	208
Table 6.5.2 - Stepwise Regression for Attitudes towards abortion	210
Table 6.5.3 - Stepwise Regression for Attitudes towards son preference	211
Table 6.5.4 - Stepwise Regression for attitudes towards fertility (existing family size)	212
Table A - Chi- Square among independent and dependent variables	181
Table B - Analysis of variance among independent and dependent variables	191